



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer-
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

At its meeting held February 12, 2008, the Board took the following action:

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The following statement was entered into the record for Supervisor Burke:

“Today we are faced with a conundrum; the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) is expected to undergo severe service and budget cuts, while at the same time expecting an impending infusion of millions of new service dollars.

“Over the past several years, DMH has faced serious funding challenges, creating the need to enact budget reductions. For Fiscal Year 2007-08, DMH is facing a deficit currently projected at \$24 million; a deficit caused by a number of factors, including Vehicle License Fees (VLFs) coming in significantly lower than projected and realignment funding remaining flat. Realignment revenue, along with VLFs supports core services and is the base funding for services to clients with no payor source and serves as the local match for federal dollars. There has been virtually no growth in the sales tax realignment funding over the past several years, with VLF experiencing some growth in past years, but has now unexpectedly declined in FY 2007-08.

“On the other hand, Los Angeles County along with the 58 other counties are waiting for the full implementation and full disbursement of funds from the 2004 voter-approved State Proposition 63 - the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). To date over \$100 million dollars have been disbursed, with millions more impending in within the next two years.

“Thus, this has created a situation where there have been simultaneous reductions in core mental health programs with concurrent growth in other programs, primarily due to the MHSA.

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“The Department of Mental Health, both directly and through its contract agencies, delivers critically needed mental health services to the children, adolescents, adults and older adults in this County. It is essential that all efforts be made to ensure that, at this time of budget shortfalls, new funding available through the MHSA be used as judiciously and flexibly as possible.

“I therefore recommend that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Mental Health to:

1. Assist community agencies in transforming their programs to the degree appropriate and possible to utilize Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding to mitigate the impact of the current year budget deficit on services to clients; and
2. Work with any other stakeholders interested in promoting advocacy to the State to allow for the maximum appropriate flexibility in the use of MHSA funding to mitigate impact to current and potential future services; and pursue such actions including but not limited to, advocating to the State to give counties flexibility to place one-time funds generated from future potential one-time MHSA allocations and/or potential MHSA savings, into the County MHSA special fund which can be used for future contingencies including maintaining services outside of the MHSA plan.”

Supervisor Antonovich made the following statement:

“A stated purpose of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) is to prevent the incidence of untreated serious mental illness and to reduce its long-term adverse impact on individuals, families, state and local budgets. As indicated in my July 17, 2007 motion, directly investing MHSA funding in the enhancement and improvement of approaches to address the mental well-being of foster children is well within the stated purpose of MHSA. Yet foster children remain part of a ‘focal population’ in the MHSA planning process.

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“We need to prevent children’s entry into care. For those children already in care, we need to safely reunify them with their parents or establish their alternative permanency in a timely manner. For those youth who will age-out of care without permanency, we need to provide continued services and financial supports. Los Angeles County’s foster children experience some of the highest incidents of mental illness due to the obvious traumas of abuse or neglect, the loss of their biological parents, and ensuing multiple foster care placements. Failure to address these issues early on in their lives will yield the same, if not greater incidence of negative outcomes in their adulthood, such as homelessness and incarceration, which MHSA seeks to mitigate.

“One of the most effective strategies to achieving the desired outcomes for all Los Angeles County children who are either at risk of entering or already in foster care is the delivery of mental health screening, assessment and treatment services for substance abuse, domestic violence and sexual abuse. For that reason, nothing short of dedicating a portion of MHSA funds toward specific new and innovative services to foster children should be pursued. Yet, since July 2007, it remains unclear to this Board how the significant funding resource of MHSA can or will be utilized as part of the evolving process of determining how to improve the County’s ability to meet the mental health needs of foster children.

“I therefore recommend that Supervisor Burke’s recommendation be amended to instruct the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Directors of Mental Health, Children and Family Services and Public Health report back on a quarterly basis to:

1. Identify Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding opportunities to ensure that available funding can be maximized to serve the mental health needs of foster children;
2. Identify specific new mental health screening, assessment and treatment services that MHSA can fund; and
3. Develop a clearly-defined interdepartmental strategy by which MHSA funds will support improved outcomes in prevention, reunification and permanency for the most vulnerable children in our society.”

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Dr. Robin Kay, Acting Chief Deputy Director of Mental Health, responded to questions posed by the Board.

After discussion, on motion of Supervisor Antonovich, and by common consent, there being no objection, the Board approved Supervisor Burke's and Antonovich's recommendations as follows:

1. Directed the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Mental Health to take the following actions:
 - Assist community agencies in transforming their programs to the degree appropriate and possible to utilize Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding to mitigate the impact of the current year budget deficit on services to clients;
 - Work with any other stakeholders interested in promoting advocacy to the State to allow for the maximum appropriate flexibility in the use of MHSA funding to mitigate impact to current and potential future services; and
 - Pursue such actions including but not limited to, advocating to the State to give counties flexibility to place one-time funds generated from future potential one-time MHSA allocations and/or potential MHSA savings, into the County MHSA special fund which can be used for future contingencies including maintaining services outside of the MHSA plan.
2. Directed the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Directors of Mental Health, Children and Family Services and Public Health to report back on a quarterly basis on:
 - Identifying Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding opportunities to ensure that available funding can be maximized to serve the mental health needs of foster children;
 - Identifying specific new mental health screening, assessment and treatment services that MHSA can fund; and

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- Developing a clearly-defined interdepartmental strategy by which MHSA funds will support improved outcomes in prevention, reunification and permanency for the most vulnerable children in our society.

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Each Supervisor
Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Director of Children and Family Services
Director of Mental Health
Director of Public Health